

IMPACT OF SELECTED INFLUENCORS ON DECISIONS
TO ATTEND OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
AND MAJOR IN AGRICULTURE

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When students in high school reach their senior year they have many big decisions to make. Some people may go into the working world, some may go into the military, some may attend a junior college and some might choose higher education in a four year university.

If a person is interested in majoring in agriculture at a university or college in Oklahoma he/she may have a choice between eight different institutions that have agricultural programs. The largest number of people have decided to attend Oklahoma State University College of Agriculture. There are many reasons why a person may decide to attend Oklahoma State University (OSU). With a decreasing number of high school seniors it becomes more important to learn what attracts students to the Agricultural College at OSU.

Statement of the Problem

In the past several years enrollment in the College of Agriculture at Oklahoma State University has increased every year up to 1976 with a record enrollment of 2,111. In 1977 this decreased to 2,103, in 1978 a decrease to 2,086 was recorded and in 1979 the College of Agriculture fell below 2,000 to 1,951. In the fall of 1980 an increase to 2,008 was officially recorded. The number of high school graduating seniors has started to decline and will continue to decrease for several years.

How will this affect the enrollment in the College of Agriculture at OSU?

During the fall of 1980, the Agriculture Placement Service at OSU was unable to fill the 100 different interview schedules which were available for agriculture graduates. However, this situation is not unique to OSU. Vern Freeh, (2) head of the Short Course Department, University of Minnesota, stated:

There has been a downward trend in the number of students enrolling in colleges of agriculture for the past ten years and the number of agriculture students as a proportion of the total land grant college enrollment has decreased consistently for the last twenty years. It is predicted that, if present enrollment trends continue, agricultural colleges will be graduating barely enough to fill one-fifth of the agricultural positions requiring college trained men by 1970 (p. 168).

Even though this prediction made in 1960 has been delayed a few years, Oklahoma is now beginning to see this occur. Obviously there is a need for agricultural majors both now and in the future. With the decreasing high school graduates, it will become increasingly more important for the College of Agriculture at OSU to attract new students into the program.

Several studies have been conducted nationwide to determine why students chose a particular school. Because of the need to at least stabilize enrollment there appeared to be a need for research to determine what has attracted freshmen to the College of Agriculture at OSU.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to determine who or what influenced freshmen to attend OSU and major in Agriculture. The study was divided into four main areas of influence: people, factors, activities, and

sources of information and included their degree of influence. This information should prove helpful to the Agriculture College in determining methods of attracting more graduating seniors into agriculture programs.

Objectives of the Study

In order that the study achieve its purpose, the following objectives were formulated:

- ✓1. To determine the effect different people had and which three had the most influence on a student's decision to major in agriculture at OSU.
- ✓2. To determine the effect different factors had and which three had the most influence on a student's decision to major in agriculture at OSU.
3. To determine the effect different activities had and which three had the most influence on a student's decision to major in agriculture at OSU.
- ✓4. To determine the effect different sources of information had and which three had the most influence on a student's decision to major in agriculture at OSU.
5. To determine when a student decides to continue their education and go to college.

Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, the following assumptions were accepted:

1. Most of the freshmen in the Agriculture College at OSU

were enrolled in Agriculture Orientation 1011.

2. That the practices and procedures used in the questionnaire were perceived by the respondents as a honest expression of their opinion on why they decided to attend the College of Agriculture.

Definitions

Articulation - The linkage in the progress along the learning continuum, used to refer to a student changing from high school to a college or university.

College of Agriculture at OSU - Refers to the resident teaching function and to majors in general agriculture, agriculture communications, agriculture economics, agriculture education, agriculture engineering, agronomy, animal science, biochemistry, entomology, forestry, horticulture, mechanized agriculture, plant pathology, and preveterinary science at OSU.

Influence of Factors - Refers to all things besides people, activities and sources of material that might influence an individual to attend OSU and major in agriculture.

Influence of Activities - Refers to all things besides people, factors, and sources of material that might influence an individual to attend OSU and major in agriculture.

Available Degree Program and/or Curriculum Offerings - Refers to the different majors/departments and their associated curriculum offerings available in the College of Agriculture at OSU.

Course Offerings - Refers to all course work offered to students within the College of Agriculture.

Scope of Study

The scope of the study dealt only with those students enrolled in Agriculture Orientation 1011 at OSU during the fall semester of 1980. The students rated each item under the areas of influential people, influential factors, influential activities, and influential sources of information according to its importance in their decision to major in agriculture at OSU. Each item was rated as very great, great, moderate, some, none, and does not apply.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of Literature was conducted with the intent of determining what other institutions found to be reasons why students chose to attend their college. It should give the writer an idea of what items to include in a study and help outline some important objectives. The recruitment effort, or lack of it, by an institution must be considered when looking at why students decide on a particular place of higher education. Articulation is generally the accepted term used by high school and college relation departments around the United States. There is a growing need to have better articulation practices between the high school and college level. Traxler and Townsend (13) say many high schools have people to guide and counsel students but many lack the trained personnel to do a professional job of guidance between the high school and college level.

Information was found by a questionnaire sent around the country by the Committee on School and College Relations of the Education Records Bureau that college counseling is actually done by students' friends and their parents (13). In a book written on the study, the editors, Traxler and Townsend (13) stated:

It is hoped that the final decision about the colleges to be considered seriously are made by the applicant himself. But it is a matter of major concern to the guidance program that the student shall have available as much good, clear, and helpful information about the colleges he is investigating as the high school can possible accumulate (p. 26).

According to a survey on what influences a student's choice of colleges, given to a national sample of some eight thousand students taking the American College Test, it was found that advice from high school counselors or college consultants and talks with college admission counselors were rated as very low influences both by men and women (8). While having good faculty and high scholastic standards were considered by both male and female as the two most important influences that affected their choice of colleges. These students would generally consider "special curriculum," "desirable intellectual atmosphere," and "national reputation," as important factors on their decision and are characterized by their academic interests and values (8).

Green (3) found in a survey given to a student group studying agricultural education at a college or university, that recruitment efforts by vocational agriculture teachers, teacher educators, and parents rated as highly influential. In the same study Green (3) found that superintendents and principals, recruitment booths at state fairs, shows, etc., and school counselors were rated as some of the least influential. While career days on college/university campus was 11th out of 25, career days in local high schools was 8th, provisions for agriculture education majors to visit with prospective students at judging contests, conventions, etc. was 7th, and college scholarships for agriculture students was 6th.

The university's reputation for academic excellence was one of the main reasons why students enrolled in the University of Illinois as outlined in a college student survey which was mailed to approximately 2,850 beginning freshmen (6). The Associate Director of Admissions and Records, Menacker (6), also found that the most accurate sources of

preadmission were "talking to enrolled students," "visits to campus," and "campus literature" (p. 2), in that order. He had also discovered that the most influential people in deciding what college to choose were (in order): (1) parents, (2) brothers and sisters, (3) friends in high school, (4) friends already attending college, (5) high school counselor, (6) other relatives, (7) high school teacher, and (8) college recruiter. The most influential sources which helped the student decide on their college choice were : (1) visit to a college campus, (2) talking with college students, (3) college catalogs, (4) handbooks and guides printed about colleges, and (5) other recruitment materials printed about colleges, in that order.

In the fall of 1961 a questionnaire was developed and administered to 339 first term male freshmen students at Michigan State University. In the study, Freeh (2) found that farm youth enrolled in agriculture curricula for the main reasons of:

- a. Their parents or guardians were full-time farmers.
- b. The adults they admired most were in agricultural occupations.
- c. Their closest friends were aspiring to agriculture careers.
- d. They had studied vocational agriculture in high school.
- e. They had participated in the Future Farmers of America (FFA) and 4-H.
- f. They had a good understanding of career opportunities in agriculture.
- g. Their first career choice was farming.
- h. They had visited the college campus for FFA and 4-H

activities.

It was noted by Freeh (2) that the farm youths who were not as active in 4-H and FFA activities and were not enrolled in vocational agriculture for four years were most likely not to enroll in agricultural curricula. This would seem to suggest that students decide before they enter high school or whether they are interested in agriculture. Schools therefore should make information about agriculture, agricultural careers and curricula readily available to people before they leave grade school.

Freeh (2, p. 169) stated: "the vocational agriculture course, FFA experience, and the vocational agriculture instructor were rated high as sources of influence by students enrolled in agricultural curricula." This would support the idea of working closely with vocational agriculture departments and their students on agriculture careers and opportunities. Freeh's study revealed the data in Table I (p. 10).

In a survey conducted at the University of Illinois, Reynolds (7) found that job opportunities, FFA experiences, and the high school agriculture teacher, were the three factors that influenced students the most to major in agricultural education. While the college adviser and high school guidance counselor were seen as the least influential.

Seegmiller (9) found that students thought a good academic reputation was the most important factor to consider when looking for a college or university.

Haskit (4) found similar results in a study given to agricultural students in most of the college and universities in the state of Oklahoma that offer agriculture programs. Students ranked course offerings as the highest factor in selecting a college and/or

TABLE I
STUDENT RATING OF PEOPLE WHO INFLUENCED
COLLEGE CURRICULA CHOICE

People	Students		
	Farm Youth in Ag Curricula	Farm Youth in Non-Ag Curricula	Nonfarm Youth in Ag Curricula
Parents	1	1	2
Adults (other than parents and teachers)	3	2	1
Friends	5	5	6
Vo-Ag Teachers	2	8	8
4-H Agent or Leader	9	9	9
Teachers other than Vo-Ag	4	3	5
High School Counselor	6	4	7
College Faculty Member	7	6	4
Employers	8	7	3
Others	10	10	10

university, with academic reputation being the 2nd most important for selecting a four-year institution and 3rd overall. Haskit did not anticipate vocational agriculture teachers being as low as 12th out of 27, with influence by parents and relatives having a virtual tie with the amount of influence by friends or fellow students' choice as the 13th/14th ranking factors. This study also helped to substantiate that campus visits are important with, familiarity with a particular school, rated as 10th.

Trent (14), of the University of California, Berkeley, found that the decision to attend college is made early in life. Trent states:

The largest population of eventual college graduates made their decision to attend college in elementary school, and frequently felt it was taken for granted by their family that they would attend college (p. 8).

He also found in his five year longitudinal study of 10,000 young adults from 37 high schools in 16 communities nationwide that there is still a need for improved advice and counseling for college bound students. Almost without exception those bright students who did not attend college were never encouraged to attend college, nor were they advised by their teachers and counselors of their ability.

Summary

Stahman, Hanson, and Whittlesey (11) came to the conclusion that parents have one of the greatest influences regarding the decision to attend college. Most of the data in the studies tend to support the fact that the high school counselor and college recruiter had little affect on a student's decision.

Manacker (5) feels that we need better counseling and guidance at

the high school level and quotes from the late U.S. Senator Wayne Morse, speaking at the twenty-fifth National Conference on Higher Education in March 1970:

If America's multisystem or 'systemless' apparatus for higher education is to work in the best interests of the individual as well as society, high priority attention must be given to providing adequate counseling, guidance and evaluation, and appropriate data in the schools. Each student should have the opportunity and the necessary assistance to determine his own interests and talents and to assess the educational and career avenues open to him (p. 24).

Even though this is their duty, Manacker says high school counselors and college admission and articulation officers would agree with him on the idea that they do not achieve effective counseling.

In summation it was found through the review of literature that the academic reputation of the university play a large role on students' decisions of where to attend college. Visits to the college campus were influential in most cases while parents continue to be a decisional factor in the selection of a university choice. In most cases parents were the most influential people except when a student was involved with vocational agriculture. The FFA experience and activities were very important and the Vo-Ag teacher exerts an influence on this group. The curriculum and course offerings available were also among those listed as one of the main reasons for students enrolling in a particular university.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND CONDUCT OF STUDY

This chapter deals with describing the methods and procedures used in conducting the study. The main purpose was to determine who the people were that influenced the students' choice of agriculture and what the factors, activities, and sources of information were that had the most influence in attracting students to the College of Agriculture at OSU.

The Study Population

The writer found that several studies had been made dealing with factors and people that influence students on their choice of where to attend an institution of higher learning. The population of this study was comprised of all freshmen taking Agriculture Orientation 1011. During the fall semester of 1981 the College of Agriculture had 356 freshmen enrolled at the beginning of the semester. Of these, 326 students were surveyed during the final week of the semester while enrolled in Agriculture 1011, an orientation to agriculture courses.

Development of the Instrument

The writer determined the best way to gather information was from a forced answer type questionnaire. In order to develop the questionnaire the writer took several ideas from the instruments reviewed in

other literature. It was then decided that to get the best results, the survey should be divided into four parts of 15 questions on the people that were influential, 22 questions on the factors that were influential, 13 questions on the activities that were influential, and nine questions on the sources of information that were influential in the students' choice to attend the College of Agriculture at OSU. The survey also included nine general questions about career development.

Collection and Treatment of Data

Data were collected by the use of a questionnaire given to each student during two sections of Agriculture Orientation 1011 during the fall semester of 1980. At this class meeting, roll was taken and those who were absent were required to come by the Dean's office to complete the instrument before they left campus for the semester break.

Due to the nature of the survey data, descriptive statistics such as item counts and mean responses were used to summarize the findings. Categorically interpret the mean responses calculated a range of real limits for each category of responses was formulated. This range is described in detail in the early portion of the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter deals with presentation and analysis of data obtained from the responses of 329 freshmen in agriculture orientation 1011. Tables one through eight were established to show the degree of influence and an indication of the most important groups of influences including: people, factors, group activities, and sources of information.

The mean responses in Tables II, IV, VI, VIII were developed by tallying responses from each of the groups listed in the tables. These were multiplied by a given scale value according to the following pattern:

<u>RESPONSE</u>	<u>SCALE VALUE</u>
Very Great	5
Great	4
Moderate	3
Some	2
None	1

The sums were then divided by the total number of responses in each to reach a mean value. A range of value for interpreting the mean responses was developed as follows:

<u>RESPONSE</u>	<u>MEAN VALUE</u>
Very Great	4.00 - 3.50
Great	3.49 - 2.50
Moderate	2.49 - 1.50
Some	1.49 - .50
None	.49 - 0

Tables III, V, VII, IX, were developed from responses students gave as an indication of either the first most influential, second most influential or third most influential, person, factor, activity or source of information. A rank order was then established on the basis of the number of times a student responded in that group.

Influence of People

From Table II (p. 17) it can be determined that on the average, parents are indicated as having a "Great" degree of influence on students' decisions to attend OSU and major in agriculture. The mean response for parents was 2.62 which ranked them as first in this regard. Local Vo-Ag teachers were rated as having the next highest degree of influence with 2.05 mean response, which placed them in a "Moderate" amount of influence category. Current OSU students were rated as having the third highest degree of influence with a 1.51 mean response, which also established them as having "Moderate" amount of influence.

The rest of the people listed were rated as having "Some" degree of influence on a students' decision to attend OSU and major in agriculture. These people, along with their respective mean response and rank order, were: relatives (1.47-4th), local veterinarian (1.45-5th),

TABLE II
DEGREE OF INFLUENCE OF PEOPLE

Persons	Number Responding	Mean Response	Degree of Influence	Rank
A. H.S. Vo-Ag Teacher	228	2.05	Moderate	2
B. County Extension Agent	233	.62	Some	13
C. H.S. Counselor	299	1.04	Some	12
D. H.S. Principal	310	.57	Some	14
E. H.S. Teacher	314	1.20	Some	11
F. Parents	320	2.62	Great	1
G. Brothers or Sisters	295	1.43	Some	6
H. Relatives	318	1.47	Some	4
I. Local Farmer	286	1.23	Some	8
J. Local Veterinarian	286	1.45	Some	5
K. OSU Faculty or Staff	292	1.21	Some	9
L. H.S. Friends	313	1.35	Some	7
M. OSU Students	306	1.51	Moderate	3
N. OSU Alumni	292	1.20	Some	10
O. Other	82	.54	Some	15

brothers or sisters (1.43-6th), high school friends (1.35-7th), local farmer (1.23-8th), OSU faculty and staff (1.21-9th), OSU alumni (1.20-10th), high school teacher (1.20-10th), high school counselor (1.04-12th), county extension agent (.62-13th), high school principal (.57-14th), and other (.54-15th).

Data summarized in Table III were collected as another means of determining which persons were most influential on students' decisions to enroll in agriculture at OSU. Under this procedure, students were asked to designate the first, second, and third most influential people in terms of helping them decide upon a college program of studies. A rank order of these people was then designed on the basis of the number of times a person was thus named.

A total of 220 students indicated that parents were at least among the top three groups influencing them. Of these, 125 named parents first. High school vocational agriculture teachers were indicated by 99 students, making them the next most influential people. Fifty students named these teachers as the person influencing them most on their decision to attend the College of Agriculture at OSU.

Other influential people, listed respectively by rank order and total number responding that these people were their first, second, or third most influential choice, were: brothers and sisters (3rd-81), local veterinarian (4th-74), relatives (5th-70), OSU students (6th-69), high school friends (7th-65), OSU faculty or staff (8th-49), OSU alumni (9th-40), local farmer (10th-36), high school teacher (10th-36), high school counselor (12th-34), county extension agent (13th-18), other (14th-11), and high school principal (15th-8).

TABLE III
INDICATION OF THE FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD
MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE

Persons	Responses by Rank			Total Responses	Rank
	1	2	3		
A. H.S. Vo-Ag Teacher	50	31	18	99	2
B. County Extension Agent	4	6	8	18	13
C. H.S. Counselor	6	8	20	34	12
D. H.S. Principal	2	2	4	8	15
E. H.S. Teacher	3	16	17	36	10
F. Parents	125	63	32	220	1
G. Brothers or Sisters	33	31	17	81	3
H. Relatives	10	30	30	70	5
I. Local Farmer	8	15	13	36	10
J. Local Veterinarian	19	29	26	74	4
K. OSU Faculty or Staff	13	19	17	49	8
L. H.S. Friends	13	24	28	65	7
M. OSU Students	11	20	38	69	6
N. OSU Alumni	7	9	24	40	9
O. Other	4	2	5	11	14

Influence by Factors

From inspection of data in Table IV it was disclosed that the available degree programs and/or curriculum offerings were rated as a factor have "Great" influence on a students' decision to major in Agriculture at OSU. The calculated mean response to this item was 2.77, making it the highest rated on the list. Course offerings, with a mean of 2.71, was ranked second and also classified as having a "Great" degree of influence. Opportunity to continue working with livestock and/or crops with a mean of 2.33 had a "Moderate" degree of influence along with OSU's academic reputation, mean 2.23.

Other items having a "Moderate" degree of influence and their respective mean response and rank levels were: location (2.08-5th), 4-H and/or FFA experience (1.96-6th), facility well equipped and attractive (1.68-7th), OSU's social reputation (.166-8th), close to home (1.65-9th), and size (1.50-10th).

The opportunity to enter farming part time (1.48-11th), faculty characteristics (1.38-12th), clubs and organizations of the College of Agriculture (.128-13th), receive an academic scholarship to OSU (1.20-14th), cost (1.14-15th), financial aids available (1.11-16th), available student services (1.10-17th), student body characteristics (1.06-18th), interest in the college judging teams (1.03-19th), available jobs (.80-20th), and far from home (.67-21st), were all indicated to have had "Some" influence on students' decisions to study agriculture at OSU. The only item judged overall to have had no influence was the receipt of an athletic scholarship with a mean of .13 and a rank of 22nd.

Table V was another way of collecting data in order to find what

TABLE IV
DEGREE OF INFLUENCE OF FACTORS

Factors	Number Responding	Mean Response	Degree of Influence	Rank
A. OSU's Academic Reputation	322	2.23	Moderate	4
B. OSU's Social Reputation	322	1.66	Moderate	8
C. Location	324	2.08	Moderate	5
D. Size	322	1.50	Moderate	10
E. Financial Aids Available	297	1.11	Some	16
F. Available Jobs	292	.80	Some	20
G. 4-H and/or FFA Experience	259	1.96	Moderate	6
H. Student Body Characteristics	311	1.06	Some	19
I. Faculty Characteristics	312	1.38	Some	12
J. Available Degree Program and/or Curriculum Offerings	326	2.77	Great	1
K. Course Offerings	326	2.71	Great	2
L. Close to Home	298	1.65	Moderate	9
M. Far From Home	228	.67	Some	21
N. Interest in College Judging Teams	263	1.03	Some	18
O. Cost	313	1.14	Some	15
P. Available Student Services	312	1.10	Some	17
Q. Facility Well Equipped and Attractive	319	1.68	Moderate	7
R. Opportunity to Continue Working With Livestock and/or Crops	287	2.32	Moderate	3
S. Opportunity to Enter Farming Part-time	277	1.48	Some	11
T. Received an Academic Scholarship to Attend OSU	276	1.20	Some	14
U. Received an Athletic Scholarship to Attend OSU	111	.13	None	22
V. Clubs and Organizations of the Agriculture College	293	1.28	Some	13

TABLE V
INDICATION OF THE FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD
MOST INFLUENTIAL FACTORS

Factors	Responses by Rank			Total Responses	Rank
	1	2	3		
A. OSU's Academic Reputation	55	19	21	95	4
B. OSU's Social Reputation	10	17	21	48	8
C. Location	17	20	29	64	6
D. Size	2	6	3	11	18
E. Financial Aids Available	3	10	3	16	15
F. Available Jobs	0	0	3	3	21
G. 4-H and/or FFA Experiences	45	22	18	85	5
H. Student Body Characteristics	2	5	6	13	16
I. Faculty Characteristics	3	6	13	22	12
J. Available Degree Program and/or Curriculum Offerings	79	54	20	153	1
K. Course Offerings	29	58	30	117	2
L. Close to Home	12	20	20	52	7
M. Far From Home	1	3	5	9	19
N. Interest in College Judging Teams	5	6	9	20	14
O. Cost	5	5	11	21	13
P. Available Student Services	0	0	4	4	20
Q. Facility Well Equipped and Attractive	2	10	17	29	10
R. Opportunity to Continue Working With Livestock and/or Crops	24	32	50	105	3
S. Opportunity to Enter Farming Part-time	9	15	14	37	9
T. Received an Academic Scholarship to Attend OSU	11	6	7	24	11
U. Received an Athletic Scholarship to Attend OSU	1	0	1	2	22
V. Clubs and Organizations of the Agriculture College	1	2	9	12	17

factors were the most influential on OSU's freshmen students' decision to major in agriculture. With this method, students were asked to select the first, second, and third most influential factor in terms of helping them decide upon a college choice. From the data presented in Table V it was found that available degree program and/or curriculum offerings ranked as the most important factor for majoring in agriculture at OSU with 79 students identifying it as their most important choice while 153 total students rated it among the top three. Course offerings was noted as having the second largest number of students responding to it as one of the top three most influential factors, but only showed 29 students marking it as the most influential.

Fifty-five students listed OSU's academic reputation as their first most influential factor while only 95 indicated it as one of the top three influential factors, placing it in 4th place. The opportunity to continue working with livestock and/or crops was ranked 3rd with 105 showing this factor as their first, second, and third most influential. Eighty-five students placed their 4-H, and/or FFA experience as one of the three most influential, while 45 marked this as their first most influential factor for a 5th place ranking. Location (64), close to home (52), OSU's social reputation (48), opportunity to enter farming part-time (37), facility well equipped and attractive (29), received an academic scholarship to attend OSU (24), faculty characteristics (22), cost (21), interest in college judging teams (20), financial aids available (16), student body characteristics (13), clubs and organizations of the Agriculture College (12), size (11), far from home (9), available student services (4), available jobs (3), and received an athletic scholarship to attend OSU (2), were respectively listed sixth

through twenty-second in rank order by the total number of students who felt it as the first, second, and third most important factor influencing their choice of attending OSU and entering the College of Agriculture.

Influence by Activities

Table VI was developed to summarize the degree of influence selected activities had on decisions of freshmen to enroll in agriculture at OSU. From the data it was found that attending the state FFA convention was ranked as the highest degree of influence with a mean of 1.87. One hundred eighty students marked it as such for a "Moderate" degree of influence on their decisions to choose a degree in Agriculture. A "Some" response level was attributed to high school career days with 255 responding to it as an influence with a mean of 1.44 for the second highest degree of influence. Participation in a state FFA speech contest and/or other interscholastics was third with a mean of 1.39 and a "Some" response level recorded.

The remainder of the activities ranked as having "Some" degree of influence, respectively in rank order by mean response were: other activities on campus (4th-1.37), career day for high school students on the OSU campus (5th-1.35), OSU athletic events (6th-1.32), attended state 4-H roundup (7th-1.06), OSU county honors banquet (8th-1.05), participation in state 4-H contest (9th-.93), and state band contest (10th-.56). State vocal music contest and cheerleading camp were shown to have "no" degree of influence with a rank of 11 and 12 and respective means of .32 and .18.

Information gathered in Table VII was a collection of student responses indicating which activities influenced their decision to

TABLE VI
DEGREE OF INFLUENCE OF ACTIVITIES

Activities	Number Responding	Mean Response	Degree of Influence	Rank
A. Participation in State FFA Speech Contest and/or other interscholastics	188	1.39	Some	3
B. Participation in State 4-H Contest	141	.93	Some	9
C. Attended State 4-H Round-Up	128	1.06	Some	7
D. Attended State FFA Convention	180	1.87	Moderate	1
E. High School Career Days	255	1.44	Some	2
F. Career Day for H.S. Students on OSU Campus	198	1.35	Some	5
G. State Vocal Music Contest	108	.32	None	11
H. State Band Contest	114	.56	Some	10
I. OSU Athletic Events	237	1.32	Some	6
J. Other Activities on Campus	266	1.37	Some	4
K. Cheerleading Camp	88	.18	None	12
L. OSU County Honors Banquet	166	1.05	Some	8

TABLE VII
INDICATION OF THE FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD
MOST INFLUENTIAL ACTIVITIES

Activities	Responses by Rank			Total Responses	Rank
	1	2	3		
A. Participation in State FFA Speech Contest and/or Other Interscholastics	38	31	6	75	6
B. Participation in State 4-H Contest	13	13	9	35	8
C. Attended State 4-H Round-Up	10	14	6	30	9
D. Attended State FFA Convention	58	32	15	104	4
E. High School Career Days	46	38	33	117	1
F. Career Day for H.S. Students on OSU Campus	29	28	30	85	5
G. State Vocal Music Contest	3	1	1	5	11
H. State Band Contest	1	6	6	13	10
I. OSU Athletic Events	24	34	48	106	3
J. Other Activities on Campus	27	43	43	113	2
K. Cheerleading Camp	4	0	1	5	11
L. OSU County Honors Banquet	15	11	27	53	7

continue in higher education and seek a bachelor of science degree in agriculture. Students were requested to denote the first, second, and third most influential activity which helped them to make the choice of school and major.

The data illustrated in Table VII indicates that 117 ranked high school career days as one of their three most important activities attracting them to major in agriculture while 46 students listed it as their first most important activity. This was sufficient for a ranking of number one, while attending the FFA convention received 58 students responses as the most influential activity. Even though the FFA convention received the largest amount of votes for the most influential activity it only received 104 total responses as one of the top three choices for a placing of 4th. Other activities on campus and OSU athletic events were ranked as second and third with 113 and 106 responding respectively that these were their first, second, and third most influential activity.

The rest of the activities in their category, according to rank and total number responding as an influence were: career day for high school students on OSU campus (5th-85), participation in state FFA speech contest and/or other interscholastics (6th-75), OSU county honors banquet (7th-53), participation in state 4-H contest (8th-35), attended state 4-H round-up (9th-30), state band contest (10th-13), state vocal music contest (11th-5), and cheerleading camp (11th-5).

Influence of Selected Sources of Information

From Table VIII it can be determined that visits to the college campus as a source of information are indicated as having "Moderate"

TABLE VIII
DEGREE OF INFLUENCE OF SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Sources of Information	Number Responding	Mean Response	Degree of Influence	Rank
A. College Catalogues	318	1.82	Moderate	4
B. Handbook and Guides printed about colleges	314	1.72	Moderate	5
C. Visit to College Campus	313	2.48	Moderate	1
D. Talking With Other OSU Students	314	2.28	Moderate	2
E. Materials printed about College of Agriculture	317	2.01	Moderate	3
F. College of Agriculture Information Found in Ag Dept. at H.S.	268	1.27	Some	6
G. Radio and T.V.	280	.68	Some	8
H. Ag Magazine	262	.74	Some	7

degree of influence on students' decisions to attend OSU and major in agriculture. The mean response for college campus visits was 2.48, which ranked it first. Talking with other OSU students was rated as the source having the next highest degree of influence with a mean response of 2.28 and a "Moderate" degree of influence.

Materials printed about the College of Agriculture with a mean of 2.01, College catalog with a mean of 1.82 and handbook and guides printed about colleges with a mean of 1.72, were respectively ranked 3rd, 4th, and 5th. These were decided by the students to have a "Moderate" degree of influence on their decision to major in agriculture at OSU. A ranking of 6th, 7th, and 8th and a rating of "Some" degree of influence was placed respectively on: College of Agriculture information found in the Agriculture department at the high school with a mean of 1.27, agriculture magazine with a mean of .74, and radio and television with a mean of .68.

Table IX was a collection of how students response when asked to select a first, second, and third most influential source of information which affected their decision to attend OSU and major in agriculture. By this method, the most influential source of information was determined. From the data it is established that visits to a college campus ranks as the leading source of information with a total of 236 responding as a top three choice and 126 listing it as the first most influential source of information. Talking with other OSU students ranks second with 86 responding as the first most influential for a total of 208 responding as either first, second or third most influencing source.

Other sources of information listed in this category, respectively

TABLE IX
INDICATION OF THE FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD
MOST INFLUENTIAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Sources of Information	Responses by Rank			Total Responses	Rank
	1	2	3		
A. College Catalogues	48	35	49	132	4
B. Handbook and Guides printed about colleges	15	45	45	105	5
C. Visit to College Campus	126	71	39	236	1
D. Talking With Other OSU Students	86	85	37	208	2
E. Materials Printed About College of Agriculture	22	45	83	150	3
F. College of Agriculture Information Found in Ag Dept. at H.S.	12	17	28	57	6
G. Radio and T.V.	1	4	9	14	8
H. Ag Magazine	2	4	9	15	7

by rank and total number responding as one of the top three influences, were: materials printed about the College of Agriculture (3rd-150), college catalogs (4th-132), handbook and guides printed about colleges (5th-105), College of Agriculture information found in the Agriculture departments at high school (6th-57), agriculture magazine (7th-15), and radio and television (8th-14).

Age When Student Decides on a College Career

According to the information gathered in Table X, 64 or 21.48% of the students surveyed decided to attend college when they were in the 5th grade. During the ninth grade 55 or 18.46% made their decision while 54 or 18.12% did not make their decision until their senior year for a ranking of second and third respectively.

From Table XI it is found even though many students made the decision to attend college early they hadn't decided on the College of Agriculture at OSU until they were older. By the 5th grade 7 or 2.40% of the respondents figured on majoring in agriculture. During their junior year in high school 18.49% or 54 respondents choice to attend the College of Agriculture while 153 or 52.40% made that decision their senior year.

TABLE X
YEAR OF SCHOOL THAT RESPONDENTS
DECIDED TO ATTEND COLLEGE

Year in School	Distribution	
	Number	Percent
5	64	21.45
6	12	4.03
7	26	8.72
8	21	7.05
9	55	18.46
10	31	10.47
11	35	11.74
12	54	18.12

TABLE XI
YEAR OF SCHOOL THAT RESPONDENTS DECIDED TO
ATTEND OSU COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

Year of School	Distribution	
	Number	Percent
5	7	2.40
6	3	1.03
7	4	1.37
8	7	2.40
9	27	9.25
10	37	12.67
11	54	18.49
12	153	52.40

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

As previously stated, the primary purpose of this study was to determine what influenced freshmen to attend OSU and major in Agriculture. The data for the study were collected from the responses to a questionnaire and analysis of data was divided into four main areas of influence which include: influence of people, influence by factors, influence by activities, and influence of selected sources of information.

The goals of this study were met by establishing five major objectives. These objectives were:

1. To determine the effect different people had and which three had the most influence on a student's decision to major in agriculture at OSU.
2. To determine the effect different factors had and which three had the most influence on a student's decision to major in agriculture at OSU.
3. To determine the effect different activities had and which three had the most influence on a student's decision to major in agriculture at OSU.
4. To determine the effect different sources of information

had and which three had the most influence on a student's decision to major in agriculture at OSU.

5. To determine when a student decides to continue their education and go to college.

Summary of Findings

A compilation of the findings of the study revealed that the average freshman student who decided to attend Oklahoma State and major in agriculture in the fall of 1980 did not decide specifically on the College of Agriculture until the junior and senior year in high school. Almost half of these students had made the decision to further their education past high school level between their 5th and 8th grade in school. Of these freshmen, 199 grew up on a farm and 128 did not, while 161 (49%) were in FFA and 137 (42%) were in 4-H. The population of their home communities varied in size: 100 from towns having a population of 2,000 and lower, 57 from those with 2,000 to 4,999, and 167 came from those having 5,000 or more residents.

Out of these freshmen majoring in agriculture, 166 knew that their high school had a career center, 116 said their school had none, and 46 didn't know. Those who used their high school career center consisted of only 104 of the freshmen students majoring in agriculture at OSU. The majority of these students (320 of the 326) felt that the College of Agriculture at OSU should strive to better acquaint juniors and seniors in high school about the opportunities and careers in agriculture.

As indicated, the study sought to determine the degree of influence that selected people, factors, activities, and sources of information

had on students' decision to enter OSU as agriculture freshmen. When responses to all of these were combined, it was found that the following three areas of influence exerted a "Great" amount of influence:

1. Available degree program and/or curriculum offerings
2. Course offerings
3. Parents

It was found that the following 16 areas exerted a "Moderate" amount of influence:

1. High school vocational agriculture teacher
2. OSU students
3. Opportunity to continue working with livestock and/or Crops
4. OSU's academic reputation
5. Location
6. 4-H and/or FFA experience
7. Facility well equipped and attractive
8. OSU's social reputation
9. Close to home
10. Size (small, large)
11. Attended state FFA convention
12. Visits to the college campus
13. Talking with other OSU students
14. Materials printed about the College of Agriculture
15. College catalogues
16. Handbook and guides printed about colleges

The following 34 areas were found to have "Some" amount of influence:

1. Relatives
2. Local Veterinarian

3. Brothers and sisters
4. High school friends
5. Local farmer
6. OSU faculty or staff
7. OSU alumni
8. High school teacher
9. High school counselor
10. County extension agent
11. High school principal
12. Opportunity to enter farming part-time
13. Faculty characteristics
14. Clubs and organizations of the Agriculture College
15. Received an academic scholarship to attend OSU
16. Cost
17. Financial aids available
18. Available student services
19. Student body characteristics
20. Interest in college judging teams
21. Available jobs
22. Far from home
23. High school career days
24. Participation in state FFA speech contest and/or other interscholastics
25. Other activities on campus
26. Career day for high school students on OSU campus
27. OSU athletic events
28. Attended state 4-H roundup

29. OSU county honors banquet
30. Participation in state 4-H contest
31. State band contest
32. College of Agriculture information found in Agriculture department at high school.
33. Agriculture magazine
34. Radio and television

The three items listed below were found to have "No" amount of influence:

1. Received an athletic scholarship to attend OSU
2. Cheerleading camp
3. State vocal music contest

Conclusions

1. Without question, parents are the ones who exert the greatest amount of influence on their childrens' decisions on where to attend college and what to major in.
2. High school principal, high school counselors, high school teachers, and county extension agents have little effect in influencing a student's decision to major in Agriculture at OSU.
3. As expected, factors such as distance, student services, athletic scholarships, available jobs, and student body characteristics, have little to do with one's decision to attend OSU.
4. Of all items listed on the survey, available degree program and/or curriculum offered and course offerings were shown

to have the greatest overall impact on freshmen's decisions to enroll with a major in agriculture.

5. The importance of FFA activities at OSU is evident by the fact that items dealing with a FFA experience on campus rated as some of the most influential activities listed.
6. Career days apparently remain popular among the high school students, but the effort required to stage these could perhaps be better put on more influential activities.
7. To further illustrate the importance of having a high school student on campus can be drawn by the fact that visits to the college campus and visiting with OSU students were the most influential and had the highest degree of influence of the sources of information listed.
8. For agricultural freshmen, personal contacts have much greater influence than recruitment efforts through mass media.
9. Students decide at an early age to attend some college with the largest percentage making that decision as early as the 5th grade. Therefore, there is a need for agricultural career information being made available to prospective students at an early stage in their schooling.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were based on the analysis of data obtained from the questionnaire, review of literature, and the personal experience of the writer as Assistant Director for Academic Services for the College of Agriculture at OSU:

1. The problem with a declining enrollment in agriculture will not be due to lack of interest but instead a lack of knowing what is available. Material stressing the existing academic programs provided by the College of Agriculture needs to be made available state wide.
2. The College of Agriculture at OSU should provide sufficient funds to hire a permanent Assistant Director for Academic Services to deal with high school and college relations.
3. Five statewide, district high school agriculture career days should be organized by the OSU and Junior college agriculture departments.
4. The College of Agriculture should send a "Careers in Agriculture" packet along with a poster holding the prospective student cards to each county extension office and vo-ag departments in the state.
5. A new brochure concerning business careers in Agriculture should be developed and distributed to high schools across the state.
6. To reach full enrollment potential, communication between the various departments within the College of Agriculture and the "Dean's Office" is essential and should be coordinated by the Assistant Director for Academic Services.
7. To organize and provide better communication to prospective students, the College of Agriculture should budget funds to purchase a mini computer connected to a word processing machine.
8. All parents of interested high school students should be

sent a brochure and letter during January of each year explaining the careers in agriculture available to their son or daughter.

9. FFA and 4-H activities on campus should continue to be stressed as an important activity of attracting students.
10. An audio/visual cassette tape should be developed concerning the student success of agriculture majors and the career areas available in agriculture.
11. It is recommended that a three year study be developed to follow a student's decision process through their junior and senior year of high school and their freshmen year at OSU.

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MAJOR: _____

HOME TOWN: _____

HIGH SCHOOL: _____

1. Did your high school have a career center?

1 yes 2 no 3 don't know

2. Did you use your career center?

1 yes 2 no 3 does not apply

3. When did you decide to attend college? (grade in school, please circle)

5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

4. When did you decide to attend the College of Agriculture at OSU? (same as 3)

5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

5. Please indicate the degree of influence the following people had on your decision to attend OSU and major in Agriculture.

	Degree of Influence					
	Very Great	Great	Moderate	Some	None	Does Not Apply
A. H.S. Vo-Ag teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6
B. County Extension Agent	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ C. H.S. Counselor	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ D. H.S. Principal	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ E. H.S. Teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ F. Parents	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ G. Brothers or Sisters	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ H. Relatives	1	2	3	4	5	6
I. Local Farmer	1	2	3	4	5	6
J. Local Veterinarian	1	2	3	4	5	6
K. OSU Faculty or Staff	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ L. H.S. Friends	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ M. OSU Students	1	2	3	4	5	6
N. OSU Alumni	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ O. Other (Please specify)	1	2	3	4	5	6

6. Please indicate the three persons most influential in your decision to attend OSU and major in Agriculture by placing the letter indicated in the above question in the blank provided.

____ Most Influential ____ 2nd Most Influential ____ 3rd Most Influential

7. Listed below are possible factors which may have influenced your choice of attending OSU and the College of Agriculture. Please indicate the degree of influence.

	Degree of Influence					
	Very Great	Great	Moderate	Some	None	Does Not Apply
A. OSU's Academic Reputation	1	2	3	4	5	6
B. OSU's Social Reputation	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ C. Location	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ D. Size (small, large)	1	2	3	4	5	6
E. Financial aids available	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ F. Available Jobs	1	2	3	4	5	6
G. 4-H &/or FFA Experience	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ H. Student Body Characteristics	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ I. Faculty Characteristics	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ J. Available degree program &/or curriculum offerings	1	2	3	4	5	6
K. Course offerings	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ L. Close to Home	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ M. Far from Home	1	2	3	4	5	6
N. Interest in College Judging Teams	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ O. Cost	1	2	3	4	5	6
P. Available Student Services	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ Q. Facility well equipped and attractive	1	2	3	4	5	6
✓ R. Opportunity to continue working with livestock &/or crops	1	2	3	4	5	6
S. Opportunity to enter farming part-time	1	2	3	4	5	6

7. (Continued)

	Degree of Influence					
	Very Great	Great	Moderate	Some	None	Does Not Apply
T. Received an academic scholarship to attend OSU	1	2	3	4	5	6
U. Received an athletic scholarship to attend OSU	1	2	3	4	5	6
V. Clubs and organizations of the Agriculture College	1	2	3	4	5	6

8. Please indicate the three factors most influential in your decision to attend OSU and major in Agriculture by placing the letter indicated in the above question in the blank provided.

____ Most Influential ____ 2nd Most Influential ____ 3rd Most Influential

9. Listed below is a group of activities which might have influenced your decision on coming to OSU, please indicate the degree of influence.

	Degree of Influence					
	Very Great	Great	Moderate	Some	None	Does Not Apply
A. Participation in State FFA Speech Contest &/or other interscholastics	1	2	3	4	5	6
B. Participation in State 4-H Contest	1	2	3	4	5	6
C. Attended State 4-H Round-up	1	2	3	4	5	6
D. Attended State FFA Conventions	1	2	3	4	5	6
E. High School Career Days	1	2	3	4	5	6
F. Career Day for H.S. Students on OSU campus	1	2	3	4	5	6
G. State Vocal Music Contest	1	2	3	4	5	6
H. State Band Contest	1	2	3	4	5	6
I. OSU Athletic Events	1	2	3	4	5	6

9. (Continued)

	Degree of Influence					
	Very Great	Great	Moderate	Some	None	Does Not Apply
J. Other Activities on Campus	1	2	3	4	5	6
K. Cheerleading Camp	1	2	3	4	5	6
L. OSU County Honors Banquet	1	2	3	4	5	6

10. Please indicate the three activities most influential in your decision to attend OSU and major in Agriculture by placing the letter indicated in the above question in the blank provided.

____ Most Influential ____ 2nd Most Influential ____ 3rd Most Influential

11. Years in FFA _____

Years in 4-H _____

- ✓ 12. Listed below is a group of sources of information which may have influenced your decision on coming to OSU, please indicate the degree of influence.

	Degree of Influence					
	Very Great	Great	Moderate	Some	None	Does Not Apply
A. College catalogues	1	2	3	4	5	6
B. Handbook and Guides printed about colleges	1	2	3	4	5	6
C. Visit to College Campus	1	2	3	4	5	6
D. Talking to other OSU Students	1	2	3	4	5	6
E. Materials printed about College of Agriculture	1	2	3	4	5	6
F. College of Agriculture information found in Ag Dept. at H.S.	1	2	3	4	5	6
G. Radio and T.V.	1	2	3	4	5	6
H. Ag Magazine	1	2	3	4	5	6

13. Please indicate the three sources most influential in your decision to attend OSU and major in Agriculture by placing the letter indicated in the above question in the blank provided.

____ Most Influential ____ 2nd Most Influential ____ 3rd Most
Influential

14. Did you grow up on a farm? 1 yes 2 no

15. Please indicate the size of your community.

1 below 2,000 2 2,000-4,999 3 5,000-20,000

16. Should we make an effort to acquaint junior and seniors in high school towards what Agriculture really is?

1 yes 2 no

VITA 2

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Master of Science

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